From Urban to Agriculture
Facilitating consumers’ connection to agriculture by providing opportunities for critical thinking through a blog and podcast experience.

Jacqueline Aenlle
California Polytechnic State University, SLO
Spring 2019
Table of Contents

Concept ........................................................................................................................................3
Project Development ..................................................................................................................3
Blog Content ............................................................................................................................6
Podcast Content .........................................................................................................................14
Sustaining Operations ................................................................................................................16
Expanding Operations ...............................................................................................................16
Results ......................................................................................................................................17
Future Goals ..............................................................................................................................19
Conclusions ...............................................................................................................................21
**Concept**
Agriculture is a unique industry because it can be both unifying and polarizing. There is a growing mistrust in agricultural products and a cultural divide between producers and consumers that I aim to diminish through my work in agriculture communications. Coming from a non-agricultural background; I have an appreciation for the journey of discovery in this industry and an understanding for how difficult it can be to communicate openly about an industry that is backed by so much history and emotion. This is where the idea for this project was first conceived. Conversations between agriculturalists and consumers are not always the most productive. Much of this mistrust could be eliminated if individuals practiced media literacy and critical thinking when confronted with information. Through this website and podcast series, I aim to provide a neutral environment where there is an opportunity for diverse thought and an in-depth analysis of experiences that formed current beliefs. Using a podcast as my primary platform will appeal to learners of all kinds. A podcast can also be listened to in your own time and in your own space, which makes it a diversely applicable teaching opportunity. As with any educational platform, optimal learning involves two-way communication. To accomplish this, I decided to create a Facebook group for my audience to ask questions and react to content.

**Project Development**
The name of the website, “From Urban to Agriculture,” was initially developed because it described my own experience of coming from an urban background and pursuing an education in agriculture. But I decided that this project was about more than sharing my story; it was about helping others have the same experience of learning with agriculture and finding their own personal connection with agriculture. Therefore, the name, “From Urban to Agriculture,” indicates the topics that are covered on the blog and the relationship between urban settings and agricultural settings. I more clearly explained the purpose of this blog in the “about” tab on the website, which can be found on the next page.

I chose to use wix.com to develop the layout of my website and blog. It was initially a free format that made the designing component of the page easy. Eventually it was necessary to spend approximately $200 through wix.com in order to creat my own domain for the website: www.Fromurbantoag.com. I chose to pay for this upgrade because I saw the benefit of having a customized domain that would be easily found by new viewers.
About The Blog

I believe in every person’s ability for growth, individual thought and personal development. Which is what lead me to creating this blog! This is a space where we can openly approach different agricultural topics and find answers to questions that we have about production agriculture, our food, the environment and more. This is not a space where I will be telling you what to think, but instead will be giving you things to think about! It is my goal to provide you with the resources and information so that you can then use your own critical thinking skills to come to your own informed-opinion. I do not claim to be an expert on all agricultural topics, but will do my best to provide resources and find answers from others who are experts in their field. This website will cover topics ranging from food labels and their meaning to production animal welfare and care. Enjoy!
Mission, Vision, and Value Statements:

Mission: From Urban to Ag aims to provide high quality, reliable information about agriculture to online learners, educators, and curious consumers. Using local and online resources, we strive to increase agriculture advocacy and literacy.

Vision: We are a brand and educational platform that hopes to bridge the knowledge gap between producers and consumers by providing succinct, reliable information, and resources.

Values: Learning & Development, Leadership, Empathy, Education, Individualization

About The Author

I was born and raised in the California Bay Area. I do not come from a “traditional” agriculture background, but grew up with a love for animals, food and the outdoors. When it came time for college, I chose to pursue my Bachelors of Science in Dairy Science with a minor in Agribusiness at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. I entered the program never having seen a dairy cow, let alone worked with one! But over the next four years I was able to immerse myself in a new industry, find answers, and more importantly, ask a lot of questions! Currently, I am pursuing my Masters in Agriculture Education with an emphasis in Public Relations and hope to begin a career in Communications. I am so grateful for the opportunity to work in an industry that I’m passionate about, and am so excited to share some of my experiences with you!
Goals:
1. Produce an educational podcast series on a variety of agricultural topics, and shed light on typically ambiguous portions of agriculture.
2. Create a platform where consumers can safely ask questions they have about agriculture.
3. Provide a list of other online resources who are trustworthy and an easy read.

Blog Content
Blog topics were initially chosen based on my knowledge and expertise. Having received my Bachelor’s of Science in Dairy Science and having written an article on A2 milk previously, I felt comfortable making this topic my first blog post. Later post topics were chosen either to advertise podcast topics that would be posted soon or because they coincided with a current agricultural event happening locally such as the FFA State Finals.

Once I finish a draft copy of a blog post, I send it to be reviewed and edited by at least three individuals. These individuals check for grammatical errors, lack of clarity or detail, and quality of sources. In the future, I hope to be posting blog content more regularly (bi-weekly) to have more consistency for my audience. It is also my intention to have a blog post to support each podcast episode published. Below you will find images of each of the blog posts published thus far.
Talk Dairy to Me

Updated: Apr 22

There are many different levels of milk drinkers, ranging from the person who will slurp the leftover milk out of their cereal bowl because- yum! - to the people who may throw a dash of non-fat milk into their coffee if the barista is out of all other options.

Which are you? And if you are a non-milk drinker...why? For many people, the reason they don’t drink milk is because they are lactose intolerant. No fun! No milk, means no ice cream!

Many people around the globe are lactose intolerant; meaning they have trouble digesting the sugar in milk. But more often than not, the problem isn’t the lactose, according to an article by Elaine Watson from Food Navigator USA. A large portion of people who believe they are lactose intolerant; in reality, are experiencing an intolerance to the protein in milk. Milk contains two forms of protein (also known as beta-casein), A1 and A2. It’s the A1 milk protein that causes digestive intolerance. But don’t fret, there are producers now focusing on producing A2 milk, which is much more easy for our stomach to digest. A2 milk is just what it says, it is a product that naturally lacks the A1 beta-casein and therefore is more easily digested by consumers. Producers who wish to make this product simple select cows that naturally produce higher levels of A2 proteins in their milk.

A2 milk is still new to the market which is why this may be the first time you hear about it, but make sure you look for it the next time you’re at the store. Give it a try and let me know what you think!

#milk #A2Milk #Agriculture #Dairy #Dairyproducts
Putting the "you" in Agriculture

Updated: Apr 29

Dirty boots. callused hands, diesel trucks, and Wrangler jeans.

These are things that someone might think of when talking about agriculture. And in all honesty, 5 years ago I may have just thought of these few descriptors too. Now- nearly 5 years and soon-to-be 2 degrees later- I’ve added some new words to the list.

Green, innovative, holistic, opportunity, leadership, far-reaching, future forward.

My name is Jacqueline and I am the founder of the Urban to Ag page. For our first blog post, I want to take the time to give you a clearer picture of the reach of agriculture and how YOU fit into the industry. Because whether you know it or not, you come into contact with agriculture every day!

The dictionary defines agriculture as, ‘the science or practice of farming, including cultivation of the soil for the growing of crops and the rearing of animals to provide food, wool, and other products.’ But agriculture encompasses far more than most people realize. While the agriculture industry includes every food product you find in the store, tractors, cattle and dirt fields, it also includes our companion animals, vaccines, clothes, retailers of goods (i.e. grocery stores), processors (i.e. companies that take fluid milk and turn it into all kinds of yummy goods such as cheeses, yogurt, and ice cream), and many other people and products!

I’ve included a list below of a few of the everyday items that all rely on agricultural products to be made:
1. Footballs
2. Crayons
3. Toothpaste
4. Jeans
5. Bioplastics
6. Glue

Do you use any of these items? If so, then you are directly influencing and supporting agriculture!

When talking about agriculture and our food system, we happen across many potentially polarizing topics and labels. Organic vs. Conventional. GMO vs. Non-GMO. Gluten Free. Dairy Free. Cruelty-Free. Vegan. All these words labeling and categorizing products can be confusing and overwhelming, but ultimately, they are all part of one system and one industry. It’s all part of agriculture with one mission- to provide products desired by consumers.

Every purchasing decision you make affects the agriculture industry and trends. So, let me be the first to welcome you to the agriculture family! We are glad to have you!

If you have any questions about the information provided in this post, please follow the underlined links to their sources or contact me directly.

#Agriculture #DefineAgriculture
Pet friendly foods & plants

Updated: Apr 29

If you are anything like me, then you absolutely adore your pets. And so, it is to them that this post is dedicated to

I personally own a one-and-a-half-year-old border collie mix, and he gets into everything! So, the first step of keeping my home pet safe is ensuring that all food items, cleaning products, and plants are off the floor and out of his reach. In this post, we will be talking about the do's and don'ts of food items and plants that are safe for your furry friend.

**Food items that are great for your dog:**
1. Peanut butter
2. Chicken
3. Cheese - in moderation or small amounts in case your dog is sensitive to lactose
4. Carrots
   *This is a favorite of mine! If you have a teething puppy, you can give them a chilled carrot to chew on to soothe their teeth. Carrots are also low in calories, which makes them a great treat for dogs that are overweight.
5. Yogurt - preferable non-sweetened and with live cultures to support a healthy digestive system in your pet
6. Pumpkin & Sweet potato - these are great for dogs with a sensitive stomach
7. Green beans
8. Salmon
9. Apples
10. Oatmeal

**So many options! Let talk about some of the things you should absolutely keep away from your pet:**
1. Alcohol
2. Coffee & Tea - or anything with caffeine
3. Cooked bones
4. Chocolate
5. Garlic
6. Onions
7. Marijuana
8. Tobacco
9. Excessively salty foods
10. Grapes & Raisins
Pet safe houseplants:
1. Spider plant
2. African Violet
3. Watermelon plant
4. Christmas Cactus
5. Boston and Maidenhair Ferns
6. Friendship plant
7. Basil, Sage, Thyme
8. Parlor Palm
9. Orchid
10. Polka Dot Plant

Plants that are toxic to dogs:
1. Aloe
2. Buttercup
3. Carnation
4. Chives
5. Daffodil
6. Eucalyptus
7. Holly
8. Lavender
9. Oregano
10. Naked Lady

None of these lists are comprehensive, but give you a brief overview of some items that will be a great reward for your pup, and some that should not make the shopping list. As with most things, when in doubt try to play it safe and keep potentially toxic items up and out of your pets reach. I hope both you and your four-legged companion benefit from the content in this post! For a peek at some of my favorite at-home dog treat recipes, [click here](#)

For more information on topics found in the post, please follow the underlined hyperlinks provided or you can contact me directly. Until next time!

#Agriculture #CompanionAnimal #Dogtreats #PetSafety
Honey, Bees and Allergies

Springtime means a lot of beauty is coming our way. Birds are singing, flowers are blooming, and if you’re in California it means the sun is finally coming out!

But springtime also means allergy season, which can make all our lives very miserable, very quickly. In Spring, even those of us who don’t have “allergies” can fall victim to runny noses, watery eyes, and itchy throats- and not even the strongest anti-histamine can help us on the bad days.

But wait, there’s a cure!

Lately when I mention my allergies, one of the first recommendations I receive is to buy and eat local honey. Apparently, a spoonful of honey a day will keep the allergies away! Honey contains microscopic spores from the pollen that when ingested can help mitigate allergies.

So basically, honey is our friend- and bees make honey- so therefore, bees are our friends!

Need another reason to appreciate bees? Well, according to the National Resource Defense Council, Bees and other pollinators are responsible for 30 percent of the world’s crops and 90 percent of our wild plants!

Want to know more about bees and why they are important in your everyday life? Check out our Honey Bee podcast!
Future Farmers of America

So, at this point in the blog you might be wondering, how on earth does everyone else learn and know about this "ag stuff"? Great Question.

One thing I've discovered is that a lot of individuals who are informed and passionate about agriculture grew up involved with agricultural youth organizations such as Head, Heart, Hands, and Health (4-H) and Future Farmers of American (FFA).

Since FFA was a term that I hadn't heard of until coming to college, I assumed there might be others out there who also haven't heard of it, and as such it will be the topic of this blog post!

This past weekend, Cal Poly hosted the FFA State Finals, and I had the opportunity to facilitate in organizing and judging one of the contests. Through this experience, I was introduced to a whole new world! A world full of blue jackets, a trained speaking style, and many young passionate faces.

So, what is FFA?

According to the National FFA Organization, they are the largest youth leadership organization in the United States. California in and of itself is home to over 83,000 members! The organization encourages and facilitates in young individuals learning about leadership through community engagement, education, and Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE). These SAE's allow students to explore careers, entrepreneurship, and gain employable skills through hands-on experiences.

Below are some images from the FFA State Finals held at Cal Poly on May 4th.
Podcast Content

The From Urban to Ag podcast series covers a variety of agricultural topics. I chose to use a podcast because it is a learning platform that can be listened to anywhere; at work, in the car, at home or in a classroom. The topics for this first season of the podcast were mainly chosen based on personal analysis of the relevance of the topic in recent agriculture media coverage and on the availability of local speakers. Topics included in these podcast interviews were: Honey Bee Production, Organic Agriculture, Critical Thinking & Conflict Resolution, Ag Communications & Media Literacy, Urban Agriculture, and Dairy Animal Welfare and Care. These podcasts were ultimately uploaded to YouTube, and the links were shared via the website. I chose to post them to YouTube because it is a free service, whereas posting them onto my website would have required a fee through wix.com. The image below displays one of the first podcast videos displayed on the website.

Before each interview, I post the topic to the From Urban to Ag Facebook Group and allow members to provide their questions on the topic. These questions, along with my own set of standard questions, would then be asked during the interview. Once the questions for the episode were established, I send these questions in an email to the speaker so they can begin to prepare themselves for the interview. Below is a sample of questions asked during an interview on dairy animal welfare and care.

General Questions:

1. Tell us about yourself, how you got involved with the industry?
2. What is the history behind dairy production in the U.S.?
   1. Can you tell us a little bit about the Dairy industry in California?
3. What are the biggest challenges facing the dairy industry regarding public opinion?
4. What's something people get misunderstand about the industry?
5. What's your favorite part about working in the dairy industry?
6. If you could tell consumers one thing about dairy production, what would it be?

Specific Questions:

1. We often see “rBST Free” on milk labels …what is rBST, can it be used in the U.S.?
2. What practices do dairy producers utilize to make their productions more sustainable? (in general, or at Cal Poly)
3. What are some common ways dairy producers practice good “animal welfare and care”—what is cow comfort?
4. What is the difference between milk and milk substitutes?
Audience Questions:

1. How safe are dairy products in our country?
2. Where do you see the industry going in terms of technological advances?
3. How many years can a cow give milk for?
4. Does it hurt for the cows to be milked?

To record the podcast interviews, I used a standing microphone provided for free by the Media Lab on campus and utilized a free audio recording application called audacity. Current equipment was chosen based on accessibility and audio quality; in the future, I will not have access to the Media Lab equipment and will look for options of obtaining these pieces for myself.
**Sustaining Operations**

Social media:

In order to market the content on the website and to establish an open line for feedback, I created a Facebook social learning group. I chose to make a Facebook group instead of a page because it allowed me to initiate or moderate discussions in the forum and also allowed me to filter who can join and interact within the group. The description of this page is:

“Welcome to the Urban to Ag Facebook Community!
This is a place where we can ask questions about agriculture, food, and our environment--and work towards discovering the answers together. Do you know how your food is produced, harvested, and processed? Let's find out! It is my goal to hear from all of you and find out what questions you have about agriculture. Then I will do my best to help you find resources for more information and answers!”

Blogging:

To better sustain my blog content, I will begin seeking out guest bloggers. Being in an agricultural communications department also means I am surrounded by individuals who are actively seeking out opportunities to improve their writing and to be published. This made it easy to network with my peers and find students interested in creating blog posts to be featured on my website. The reason I decided to include guest-bolg posts was partially because it would increase the amount of content available without drastically increasing the time commitment to this portion of the project. Also, because I openly acknowledge that I am not an expert on all agricultural topics and therefore want to opportunity for my audience to hear from other writers who have more experience in a different industry within agriculture.

**Expanding Operations**

The first step to expanding my operation will be by networking to establish partnerships and applying for grants. Through partnerships, I will be able to have a more comprehensive network when seeking out guest speakers and an additional opportunity for crass advertising. Grants such as the Western SARE and NIFA Higher Education Challenge Grants could provide me with the funds needed to purchase my own necessary recording equipment. Another option for obtaining this equipment would be to create a donations document on the website where individuals can contribute portions of money toward specific items without having to cover the entire cost of the item.

Urgent Equipment Needs:
Standing Mic - $50-100
Cannon Camera & Lens- $1,400-2,500
The next step to expand my operation will be to continue to improve communications with my audience. I will do this in three ways:

a. I will create an emailing template to be sent to:
   i. potential interviewers for the podcast
   ii. to potential partners or sponsors
   iii. guest bloggers or collaborators

b. I will send email updates to new subscribers when they sign up, and reminders to all subscribers to announce when new content is published

c. I will be more consistent with interactions on Facebook and other social media channels.

Results

As of June 13th, 2019 – only 9 weeks after starting this project- the most active blog post had 23 views and 1 like. The Facebook group has 18 members, and the most popular post had 7 likes and 5 comments. To get further feedback on the success of the website thus far, I have created a survey that can be posted and completed by the members of the Facebook group. Once the website has been established for another 3 months, I will reassess the results and feedback.
From Urban to Agriculture Evaluation Survey

Name: ____________________________________________

How did you hear about this website? ________________________________

Overall Website Design: Please answer the following questions by assigning them a number from 1-5. 1 being the least agreeable and 5 being the most.

1. Aesthetic appeal of website: ______
2. Navigation ease of website: ______
3. About page had adequate info: ______
4. There was enough opportunity for comments and questions on website: ______

Please use the following space to explain any scores that were less than desirable (i.e. 3 or below).

________________________________________________________________________

Blog: Please answer the following questions as True or False.

1. Content was relevant and useful: __________________
2. Length of blog was adequate: __________________
3. I enjoyed blog with pics more than those without: __________________
4. I’d enjoy reading guest blogger posts: __________________

Please use the following space to explain any scores that were less than desirable (i.e. 3 or below).

________________________________________________________________________
Future Goals

This is a project I plan on continuing and have many ideas of how to increase the quality and usefulness of this website.

d. I will take the lesson plans created to include each podcast episode and make them available on the website. To do this, I will create a “teaching resources” tab on the website’s navigation bar. Also included in this tab will be worksheets and quizzes that can support the lessons.

e. I will create an editorial calendar for my blogging and podcasts. By posting on the blog more consistently, it will increase website traffic and interest. To begin with, I will aim to post blog content bi-weekly and a new podcast episode once a month. This calendar will also include a timeline for Facebook posts that announce upcoming podcast topics, speakers, or new blog posts.

f. I will recruit and request individuals from different sectors of the industry to join an “advisory committee” for the website. These will be individuals who have proven to be experts in their field and will agree to be a source of information for individuals who visit the website and post questions. Some ideas of individuals to contact about this opportunity are included below.
Eventually, this project will hopefully grow to the point that it would be beneficial to bring on other individuals to either help manage the website, online marketing, blog content, or podcast schedule. This could either be a chance for a fulltime position if funding permits or an opportunity for a student internship.

1. Blog manager: This individual would be in charge of coordinating and requesting content from guest bloggers as well as creating their own content.

2. Podcast Coordinator: This individual would take the initiative to determine topics of interest to our audience and then identify industry members who could speak to these topics. They would then contact potential speakers and be responsible for scheduling and correspondence with the interested parties.

3. Website and social marketing: Monitor activity on the website. Coordinate emails and content that are sent to subscribers.
Conclusions

There is an abundance of opportunity and various ways of advocating for and communicating about agriculture. This website, blog and podcast series were direct channels where I have been able to promote media literacy, agricultural literacy, the use of local sources for information, and have begun to provide a consolidated list of reliable resources. Though the content is focused on agriculture, the lessons learned and skills gained can be applied in any field or career. Having both a blog and podcast allows content to appeal to a wider range of listeners and learners. The current state of the website allows for many areas of opportunity in regards to grants, sponsorships and partnerships with other businesses within the agriculture and education industries.

Agriculture Education application component of this project will be further emphasized with the creation of the “teacher resources” tab. Agriculture Educators and non-agricultural educators who wish to incorporate a lesson on agriculture advocacy, leadership, or literacy will have the information and resources to do so.